

Evel Kneivel, Joie Chitwood, *And Evan...*

By Evan Novak
(with some help from Dad)

Hello, my name is Evan. I am 11 years old, a sixth grader, and, as I see it, a pretty good kid. Like many young guys my age, I have a sense for adventure. Dad's idea for adventure was joining the Navy. I'm not old enough for that, so I sometimes look for my own.

Down the road from where I live, my "buds" and I were playing on our bikes in a residential court off the main thoroughfare—safety in mind, right? We had an assortment of bikes, our own versions of "Harleys." In the court, we had made a jump ramp from a dirt mound, with a sheet of plywood leading to the top of it.

I know who Evel Kneivel is, and Dad has mentioned someone named Joie Chitwood to me. I have seen highlights of their stunts, and I think they are really cool.

Some of the guys had started racing their bikes up the ramp and clearing the space with ease. Although a few looked like they might fall, they seemed to be having a lot of fun. I was excited, watching each kid try to outdo the jump of the one before. When it was my turn, I thought I would really thrill them. I decided I would engage "autopilot" and jump off just before clearing the ramp. It would be neat to see how the bike cleared the ramp by itself. I now realize that decision wasn't very bright. Maybe I need some of that operational risk management (ORM) training Dad has talked to me about since my



Evan, with the bike that led to a new learning experience.

accident. He says it can be used for play, as well as work.

I jumped all right, landing hard on the pavement, and, boy, did I encounter a lot of pain! To add insult to injury, the bike didn't clear the ramp, either. Some of the other kids were laughing at me as I lay crying. A parent who saw what I had done, though, came

over and asked, “Why did you do that?” She had asked a \$64,000 question, and I didn’t have an answer.

Mom and Dad were quite scared when this lady called and told them what had happened, and it wasn’t long before they were rushing me to the hospital. I spent the next four days there with a compound fracture of my left arm. After five days, I returned to school, still hurting from the accident and embarrassed about it. Unfortunately, that isn’t the end of my story.

A few weeks later, during a follow-up visit with the doc, X-rays showed that my bones weren’t growing back together right. The doc re-admitted me to the hospital for surgery to have two long pins put in my arm. Dad was out of town on assignment at the time, so Mom had to take even more time from work for my hospital stay.

Now I have to wear a cast on my arm for several more weeks, and doctors one day will have to remove the pins, which will mean another hospital stay. In the meantime, I can’t play hockey, and I need help now and then with everyday tasks.

Dad was upset for a spell with the property owners where my accident occurred, saying some-

thing about a lack of supervision. Another parent had asked the owners to take down the ramp before someone got hurt. But Dad and I know my problem was my own doing. Maybe I’ll ask him to tell me more about that ORM stuff.

Moms and dads of today’s youngsters, please be aware of what is happening in and around your home. The jump ramp that took me down came down itself right after the property owners learned someone had gotten hurt on it.

Until my arm mends, I have to deal with the pain. I also have to learn how to work with my handicap and how to face my embarrassment. I feel like I’ve overcome the latter a little bit by getting up the courage to share my story with you. I hope it can save someone else from harm. Let this be a learning experience for all of us. ✠

Evan is the son of AMCS Steve Novak, a maintenance analyst at the Naval Safety Center. According to Dad, Evan is well on his way to recovery.

Youthful daredevils aren’t the only ones who sometimes have problems with bicycles. The article that follows describes the difficulties a wife encountered when she went riding with her husband.

What Else Can Happen?

By BMC(SW/DV) Richard Vitez,
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That’s a question my wife asked when she and I went on a bicycle ride from our home to Sea Shore State Park in Virginia Beach.

It was a sunny day as we headed toward the beachfront. We stayed on the designated bike paths and crossed roadways at the crosswalks. Everything was fine until shortly after we reached the Virginia Beach boardwalk, where some work was in progress on the bike path. I saw a yellow strip of tape, about 4 feet high, across the area and went around it, but my wife didn’t follow my lead. Instead, she burst through the tape and came to a stop about 5 feet into newly laid concrete pavers.

Seeing she was OK, I couldn’t resist a few chuckles. Meanwhile, she apologized to the



Helmets are mandatory for everyone who rides a bicycle on DoD installations.